

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 2281

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: SOWETO POLICE CHIEF VISSER DISCUSSES SCHOOLS, STUDENTS,
COMMITTEE OF TEN

REF: JOHANNESBURG 2191

1. SUMMARY: IN WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION WITH CONOFF, SOWETO POLICE
COMMANDER JAN VISSER DESCRIBED HIS ROLE AS MORE THAN A POLICE
OFFICER, ENVISAGED ACCELERATED CHANGE OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS
AS THE SAG BEGAN TO ACCEPT THE NEW REALITIES OF URBAN BLACK
POLITICS, AND FEARS A NEW SERIES OF VIOLENT UPHEAVALS. VISSER
DOES NOT SEE A ROLE FOR THE COMMITTEE OF TEN, OR "OTHER SELF-
APPOINTED GROUPS", BUT DOES SEE CHANGE COMING TO SOWETO. HE
SEES THE STUDENTS BEING MANIPULATED BY OUTSIDE FORCES TO AN
EXTENT BUT HOPES CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM WILL SATISFY
MANY OF THEIR GRIEVANCES (INCLUDING A PROPOSAL FOR A SINGLE
NATIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM WHICH HE SAYS WILL COME). END SUMMARY.
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2. THE COMMITTEE OF TEN-WHILE VISSER RESPECTS THE INDIVIDUALS
MAKING UP THE COMMITTEE OF TEN, HE DOES NOT SEE IT AS A
LEGITIMATE POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVE OF SOWETO DUE TO ITS
SELF-APPOINTED STATUS. VISSER SAID PERCY QOBOZA (WORLD NEWSPAPER
EDITOR AND ARCHITECT OF COMMITTEE OF TEN) HAS TRIED ON SEVERAL
OCCASIONS TO ENGINEER A MEETING BETWEEN HIM(VISSER) AND MOTLANA
BUT VISSER HAS REFUSED. VISSER SAID HE REGARDED QOBOZA'S MANEUVER

AS A PLOY TO GAIN LEGITIMACY (AND PUBLICITY) FOR MOTLANA BY MAKING IT APPEAR VISSER WAS DEALING WITH THE COMMITTEE. VISSER DENIED THERE WAS ANY PRESSURE ON HIM BY SAG OFFICIALS TO AVOID RECOGNIZING THE COMMITTEE, SAYING "THEY CAN'T TELL ME WHO OR WHO NOT TO TALK TO IN SOWETO". VISSER CLEARLY DOES NOT REGARD THE COMMITTEE OF TEN AS HAVING ANY PROSPECTS FOR PERMANENCY ON THE SOWETO SCENE.

3. VISSER ON VISSER-VISSER SAID IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS LIABLE TO BE "STUCK" IN SOWETO THE REMAINING TWO AND A HALF YEARS UNTIL HE REACHES RETIREMENT AT AGE 55. HE SAID THERE WAS SOME TALK OF HIS BEING PROMOTED TO GENERAL BUT IT WOULD NOT INDUCE HIM INTO STAYING ONCE HE REACHED RETIREMENT AGE. HE EMPHASIZED THIS BY SAYING HE "HAD HAD IT". HE PREFERS TO MOVE INTO ACADEMIA AND TAKE A "BREATH" FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE. HE REVEALED THAT WHEN THE CRUNCH WAS ON EARLIER THIS MONTH, HE HAD ASKED KRUGER TO REMOVE HIM AS SOWETO COMMANDER BUT KRUGER ALLEGED HE COULD FIND NO ONE TO REPLACE HIM (PLUS THE FACT THAT VISSER HAS ACCUMULATED IMPRESSIVE SUPPORT IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT OVER THE LAST EIGHT MONTHS). CONSEQUENTLY, VISSER FOUND HIS HAND STRENGTHENED WHEN HIS REQUEST WAS DENIED AND NOW FEELS HE HAS MORE OR LESS CARTE BLANCHE TO ACT. VISSER REMARKED THAT HE HAS BEEN CALLED IN BY AT LEAST TWO CABINET MINISTERS (HE INTIMATED MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SPORT KOORNHOF AND MINISTER OF BANTU AFFAIRS M C BOTHA) RECENTLY AND ASKED FOR HIS RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THE URBAN BLACK PROBLEM. FURTHERMORE, HE ALLEGED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT HE HAD CABINET BACKING FOR MANY OF HIS PLANS FOR REFORM. (NOTE: HE SAID THESE CABINET INTERVIEWS WERE DONE WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF MINISTER OF JUSTICE KRUGER). AS A RESULT OF HIS APPARENT MANDATE, VISSER HAS BEEN EMPOWERED TO WORK WITH BANTU ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITIES TO OVERHAUL THE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL SYSTEM (THIS HAS BEEN CORROBORATED FROM OTHER SOURCES) AND ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT GETTING EVERYTHING HE WANTED, HE FELT HE WAS MAKING PROGRESS.

4. THE SOWETO SCHOOL SITUATION - VISSER SAID IT WAS A "CERTAINTY" THAT TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS WOULD BECOME PART OF THE BANTU EDUCATION SYSTEM (REFTEL). HE SAID BANTU ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS INTENDED CLOSING DOWN THE SCHOOLS FIRST (WHICH VISSER ADAMANTLY OPPOSES) THEN RESTRUCTURING THE SYSTEM UNDER BANTU AFFAIRS CONTROL, WITH ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BANTU EDUCATION (WHICH VISSER SUPPORTS). VISSER CONFIRMED THE SAG VIEW (REPORTED REFTEL) THAT THE SCHOOLS ARE "OUT OF CONTROL" AND IT WAS TIME TO MAKE THEM ACCOUNTABLE. HE SAID HE HAD PHOTOS TAKEN DURING RAIDS ON SEVERAL HIGH SCHOOLS THAT SHOWED INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING DYNAMITE AND PETROL BOMBS ON BLACKBOARDS IN SCHOOLS. HE AGREED TO PROVIDING SOME COPIES OF THESE PHOTOS TO POST OFFICIALS IF THEY WERE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL (WILL AIR POUCH IF VISSER PASSES THEM

ON).

5. SECURITY SITUATION- VISSER EXPECTS AND FEARS THE NEXT CRISIS IN WHAT HE SEES AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PATTERN OF VIOLENCE. THIS TIME, HE SAID, HIS INFORMANTS SPEAK OF PLANS FOR "BLACK SEPTEMBER", PLANS FOR VIOLENT UPHEAVALS IN SEPTEMBER. MOREOVER, VISSER SAID OVER THE PAST SIX WEEKS HIS MEN HAD APPREHENDED TEN MORE TERRORISTS ARMED WITH SOVIET MACHINE PISTOLS SIMILAR TO THOSE USED IN THE GOCH STREET SHOOT-OUT. THIS HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND HE ASKED THAT IT NOT BE REVEALED. HE STATED THE SOWETO POLICE COMMAND WAS BEING UPGRADED IN TERMS OF EQUIPMENT, MEN, AND TRAINING, BUT HE HESITATED TO USE GUNS. "I CAN CONTROL SOWETO WITH GUNS IF I HAVE TO, BUT GUNS ARE NOT THE WAY TO WIN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE."

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6. COMMENT: VISSER SPEAKS WITH AN ASSURANCE AND CONFIDENCE THAT STRONGLY SUPPORTS HIS CONTENTION THAT THE SAG HAS EXPANDED HIS AREA OF AUTHORITY TO MORE THAN POLICE FUNCTIONS, PARTICULARLY AFTER HIS WILLINGNESS TO STEP ASIDE WAS APPARENTLY REFUSED, AS WELL AS THE APPARENT BACKING HE HAS IN HIGHER CIRCLES (INCLUDING THE BROEDERBOND). VISSER SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED AS A KEY, ACTOR IN HOW THE SAG WILL ADAPT TO CHANGING CONDITIONS IN THE URBAN BLACK TOWNSHIPS. VISSER STATED THAT ONE COULD EXPECT A PERIOD OF ACCELERATED CHANGE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AS THE SAG UPDATES ITS THINKING. HE INDICATED THAT THE EXPERIENCE GAINED IN SOWETO OVER THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS HAD CONTRIBUTED IN GOOD PART TO CONVEYING THE FEELING IN SAG CIRCLES THAT CHANGE MUST COME IN THE URBAN TOWNSHIPS. AS MOST SOWETO BLACKS SEE IT AS WELL, VISSER REGARDS THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF SAG EFFORTS FOR PEACE IN SOWETO AS THE BENCHMARK FOR THE REST OF THE NATION.
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